

Healthy Indoor Environments

Where We Live, Learn and Play

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Ways to Save Energy This Summer

Written by Jackie Ogden, FACS Agent, UGA Extension Chatham County



Both renters and home owners are always exploring ways to reduce energy costs in their homes during warmer weather to keep their homes cooler while keeping the heat and humidity outside. Here are eight energy saving tips to keep your home cooler inside while saving dollars on your utility bill.

Inside this issue:

- Ways to Save Energy This Summer
- Selecting a Good Vacuum Cleaner
- Avoid Pests When Shopping for Secondhand Furniture
- Safety Begins at Home: Staying Healthy Can Prevent Falls
- Healthy Home Hacks

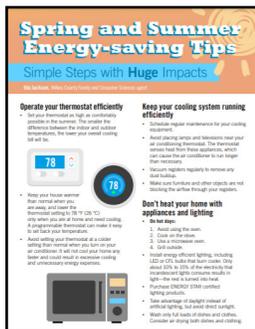
- **Adjust your thermostat.** Set the thermostat between 75- and 78-degrees F. Supplementing air-conditioners with high efficiency fans will help you feel more comfortable at higher temperatures and will keep the cooler air moving through the home. A programmable thermostat is a great addition. It allows you to set the temperature to increase or decrease at set times, giving you greater control over energy usage.

- **Change air filters at least every three months.** Using a 1-inch electrostatically-enhanced panel filters are inexpensive and can affectively trap large particles such as pollen and dust.
- **Minimize the sunshine coming indoors.** Use shades, blinds, or curtains on windows to keep the sun out. Lightly colored materials are most effective in reflecting sunlight.



Image Source: Pixabay

- **Replace incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent (CFL) lamps or LEDs.** Select Energy Star qualified lighting and replace the bulbs in frequently used fixtures. CFLs and LEDs are more expensive than traditional bulbs, but last substantially longer, consume much less energy and produce less heat for the same amount of light.
- **Seal leaks around windows and doors.** Add weather stripping and caulking to seal leaks around doors and windows. Renters should consult with the landlord for assistance in sealing leaks.
- **Decrease water heater temperature.** Lower the water heater temperature to Normal (120 degrees F). If your dishwasher does not have a booster heater, set the water heater between 130 and 140 degrees F.



Read more energy-saving tips at <https://t.uga.edu/751>

continued on p. 5

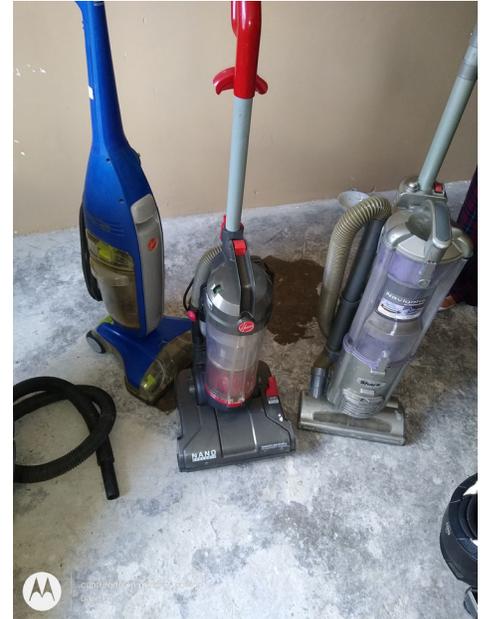
Selecting a Good Vacuum Cleaner

Written by Becca Stackhouse, FACS Agent, UGA Extension Crisp County

Are you in need of a vacuum cleaner? Let's chat about how to select a vacuum cleaner for your home. There are two basic types of vacuum cleaners – those with bags and bagless. Bagged vacuum cleaners use the replaceable bag as a filter to trap dust. Bagless vacuum cleaners use filters to trap dirt and debris in a container that needs to be emptied. The primary benefit of a bagged vacuum cleaner over a bagless vacuum cleaner is less contact with dust because the entire bag is disposed of, whereas dust may billow out of the dust container.

The type of vacuum cleaner you select can make your household chores easier.

- **Upright vacuum cleaners** are made to tackle big jobs, and are good for households with pets. This type of vacuum has powerful suction that makes it a good choice for carpets and rugs. They are difficult to use on stairs and under furniture.
- **Canister vacuums** are easy to move around and usually come with several attachments to use for those hard-to-reach areas; however, they are harder to store. This type of vacuum works well on hardwood and tile floors.
- **Stick vacuums** are useful for a quick clean-up. They are typically slender and good at getting into a tight space. They are usually cordless and work well on hard surfaces, but are less effective on carpet and rugs.
- **Handheld vacuum cleaners** fit into tight spaces and provide good suction for cleaning furniture and windowsills. They are a great tool to have for keeping furniture clean.
- **Robotic vacuums** do some of the work for you. This type of vacuum cleaner promises to take care of business while you lounge on the couch or accomplish other chores. They are good at getting into hard-to-reach spots and can be programmed to clean your house regularly. However, they do not have the same power as the upright-style vacuum. Carpets and rugs will still need to be cleaned with an upright or canister vacuum cleaner from time to time to get them really clean.



Upright Vacuum Cleaners
(Image Source: Pixabay)



Robotic Vacuum Cleaner
(Image Source: Pixabay)



Canister Vacuum Cleaner
(Image Source: Pixabay)

Avoid Pests When Shopping for Secondhand Furniture

Written by Teresa Adkins, FACS Agent, UGA Extension Decatur County

People often feel the urge to redecorate their homes during spring and summer months, but changing furniture items can be quite costly. That's where secondhand furnishings shine. There are really great furniture deals to be found at thrift stores, yard sales, estate sales, online marketplaces and other resale shops. Yet, people are often hesitant to purchase used items for fear of bringing unwanted pests into their homes. Use these five tips to confidently buy secondhand furniture pieces to enjoy in your home.

- **Check it out** – The best way to avoid pests when buying secondhand furniture is to thoroughly inspect the potential purchase item. It is important to examine cushions, seam edges, cracks, joints, undersides, frames and even screw holes. Look for signs of pests like dust-like powder, dark spots on fabric, skin sheds, droppings or holes in wood.
- **Smell it – Seriously.** Pests can give off a musty scent similar to wet shoes or clothes. If it smells damp or musty, don't buy it.
- **Consider the item's environment** – Are there pets, mold, dampness or other issues that might affect quality?
- **Clean the item** – Always clean items before bringing them into your home. Vacuum upholstered furniture meticulously, and wash hard surfaces with soapy water. Be sure to dry completely.
- **Use common sense** – Avoid lumpy, smelly or heavily stained items and those with structural damage.



Image Source: Pixabay

Healthy Home Hacks

~ Pamela Turner, UGA Extension Housing and Indoor Environment Specialist
~ Diane Bales, UGA Extension Human Development Specialist

Manage your household chore time by doing some of the work each day rather than everything once a week.

Got 30 seconds? Some quick chores include tossing junk mail into the recycle bin; dusting the TV; and wiping the light switch.

Remove marks from walls with toothpaste rubbed directly on the mark. Scrub until the stain isn't visible. Remove excess paste with a damp rag.

Make a homemade sprinkler by removing the label from a 2 liter bottle, poking holes in one side, and attaching it to a garden hose. Cover the hose connection with duct tape to prevent leaks.

Set up self-serve snacks for kids using the lower shelves of the refrigerator door. Fill large cups with fruit, cut-up vegetables, string cheese, yogurt pouches, and other healthy snacks that kids can grab when they are hungry.

Help kids dispense the right amount of hand soap by wrapping a rubber band around the pump to limit the amount that comes out.

Safety Begins at Home: Staying Healthy Can Prevent Falls

Written by Leigh Anne Aaron, FACS Agent, UGA Extension Morgan/Oconee Counties

Our homes fulfill many needs for us. Comfort and a place for self-expression are vital for our well-being. Home gives a feeling of independence and should be a place where are safe from accidents and injuries.

Home accidents are a major source of injuries and can cause death. Older persons, whose bones are often less dense and more brittle, are especially vulnerable to serious injuries from home accidents. A simple fall that results in a broken bone can become a serious, disabling injury that limits one's independence. Falls are the leading cause of injury and injury death for people 65 and older; however, falls are not a normal part of aging.

As we age, our senses of sight, touch, hearing, and smell tend to decline. Our physical abilities are reduced, and certain tasks such as stretching, lifting, and bending become more difficult. In addition, we experience a slowing of judgment and reaction time, resulting in slower response rates. These normal changes in perception, physical abilities, and judgment makes us more prone to accidents. Simple precautions and adjustments can help ensure a safe, accident-free home.

Many falls can be prevented. With a few changes, you can lower your chances of falling. Follow these four simple tips from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to make your home safer.

- **Have your healthcare provider review your medicines.** As you get older, the way medicines work in your body can change. Some medicines, or combinations of medicines, can make you sleepy or dizzy and can cause you to fall. Ask your provider about taking vitamin D supplements to improve bone, muscle, and nerve health.
- **Exercise to improve your balance and strength.** Exercises that improve balance and make your legs stronger, lower your chances of falling. It also helps you feel better and more confident. Lack of exercise leads to weakness and increases your chances of falling. Ask your doctor or healthcare provider about the best type of exercise program for you.
- **Have your eyes and feet checked.** Once a year, check with your eye doctor, and update your eyeglasses, if needed. You may have a condition like glaucoma or cataracts that limits your vision. Poor vision can increase your chances of falling. Also, have your healthcare provider check your feet once a year. Discuss proper footwear and ask your healthcare provider whether seeing a foot specialist is advised.



Image Source: Pixabay



Image Source: Pixabay

continued on p. 5

For more information on keeping your home healthy, visit

www.georgiahealthyhousing.org

Ways to Save Energy This Summer *(continued from p. 1)*

- **Select an efficient air conditioner and use it efficiently.** Choose an energy efficient model with an EnergyStar® logo and make sure it is correctly sized for your house. Learn more about selecting an air conditioner at www.energystar.gov.
- **Look for EnergyStar® qualified home appliances and electronics** which will provide year around money and energy savings. Keep equipment manuals and warranties. Establish a maintenance schedule and keep a record of maintenance.

Safety Begins at Home *(continued from p. 4)*

- **Make your home safer.** Use the University of Georgia Family and Consumer Sciences Extension home safety checklist (https://www.fcs.uga.edu/docs/Home_Safety_CheckList.pdf)
- as you go through your home. Mark those items or behaviors that you already have. If there are items that you do not check, then your home is not as safe as it could be. By improving those items not marked, you can make your home a safer and more comfortable place to live.

Making some minor household modifications and behavior changes can reduce the likelihood of trips and falls. Safety in your home begins with you identifying problems and removing hazards reducing the potential for falls.

Home Safety Checklist



Use this checklist to identify possible safety problems in your home. As you go from room to room, place a mark in the appropriate box. Go back over your checklist and identify three things you can do to make your home safer. List those three things in the bottom section of this checklist. Take action and make your home safer for you and your family.

Stairways & Porches	Yes	No	Does Not Apply
Are the stairs well lighted?			
Do all indoor stairways have light switches at the top and bottom?			
Are there sturdy handrails for all steps and stairways?			
Are the steps and stairs in good condition?			
Are there sturdy guard rails on all porches and decks?			
Are porch area(s) in good condition?			
Are the stairways a non-slippery surface?			
Living Room & Family Areas	Yes	No	Does Not Apply
Are the floors a non-slippery surface?			
Do all throw rugs have non-skid backing?			
Are carpets firmly attached to the floor?			
Is the furniture in good repair and safe to use?			
Are the traffic areas free from all cords (electrical, cable, etc.)?			
Are hallways free from clutter?			
Are hallways well lighted?			
Does the room have lighting that doesn't produce glare?			
Is there a screen in front of the fireplace?			
Are electric/gas space heaters at least 3 feet away from curtains, furniture, and other combustible objects?			
Are electric/gas space heaters placed on non-flammable surfaces and out of traffic paths?			
Are electric and gas space heaters placed where they can't easily fall over?			
Are gas space heaters properly vented?			



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